



# The Grapevine

**Newsletter of the Yountville Veterans Home  
January 8, 2009**

## A New Look for The Grapevine

What an exciting 2008 we have had. Many new things have been happening here at the home and I would like to thank all of the staff and Residents for embracing these changes and making them successful.

We are looking forward to more exciting changes in 2009. This will start with the Grapevine newsletter partnering up with the Yountville Sun. The first issue will be out on January 8, 2009 and will continue every other week. One of the things that I am looking forward to seeing in the new newsletter is articles on Residents and Employees. We have so many wonderful people living and working at the home and we forget who are among us and the differences they have made along the way.

Another thing that will be happening early this year is that the KVET TV Station will be opening its doors and calling the Armistice Chapel its home. KVET has also



*Marcella McCormack, Administrator, Yountville Veterans Home; Sharon Stensaas, Editor, Yountville Sun; Jody Price, Public Information Officer, Yountville Veterans Home*

partnered up with the Napa Valley College and will be working with the college students in the broadcasting department. We are looking forward to a new and improved KVET soon.

The KVET studio will also be used as a meeting place for many different functions. The inside of the Chapel is beautiful and makes for a warm and wonderful atmosphere.

The Veterans Home of California, Yountville will be celebrating our 125th anniversary this year. We are in the process of planning several events for the yearlong celebration.

One of the things planned for this event is a Memory Book. This will include historical and current photos and events of the home. We would also like to include group photos of Residents in each Section and Staff in each department so stay tuned for more information.

Thank you for a great 2008 and we are looking forward to an even better 2009.

## Congratulations on 25 years of State Service

In a special ceremony on November 20, 2009, the staff members of the Yountville Veterans who have completed 25 years of state service were honored with speeches, certificates and plenty of hugs. Administrator McCormack, department heads and many co-workers participated in the ceremony.

### Honored were:

Alyce Robertson – Administration  
Celia Cendejas – Human Resources  
Gabriel Kyle – Dietary & Food Service  
Martha Llamas – Plant Operations  
Henry Miller – Plant Operations  
John Luna – Plant Operations  
Josephine Bess – Medical Administrative Services  
Martha Rafanan – Human Resources  
Donna Golemon – Data Processing  
Orlando Chavez – Ambulatory Care Clinic  
Carmen Vivian – Behavior Wellness  
Marilyn Forte – Nursing  
Janice Ardizzone - Dental



**Thank you, AMVETS, for  
your continued support  
of the Yountville Veterans  
Home Media Program**



THE GRAPEVINE

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Happy 2009, Istanbul!

(not Constantinople)  
Istanbul was Constantinople.  
Now it's Istanbul, not Constantinople,  
Been a long time gone, Constantinople;  
That's nobody's business but the Turks.  
...Jimmy Kennedy and Nat Simon (1953)

Residents of Holderman Hospital at the Vets Home faced a dilemma. How could they make it to New York on New Year's Eve to watch the ball drop by midnight? The resourceful staff, along with volunteers (including those from Travis Air Force Base) simply picked up the celebration and moved it halfway around the globe. The sun was shining and it was 2pm in the Hospital Recreation Area, but it was midnight in Istanbul ... so residents welcomed the New Year there.

The result was trouble. "That starts with T and that rhymes with" ... B, and that stands for Bingo as well as poker and blackjack. Music Therapist Megan Edmundson handed out boxes of prizes as caller Mickey Gandell drew the bingo numbers. Squinty-



eyed dealers from Travis challenged residents as they faced each other across the tables. Players risked their foil-covered chocolate money on the turn of a card. It was seamy, but what happens in Holderman stays in Holderman.



A Great and Gala New Year's Eve Party

By Lou Zauner

Over 300 jubilant New Year celebrants found the hours of 7:00 to 9:30pm at the Main Dining Hall to be the sure way to have a joyous and safe New Year's Eve gathering with outstanding food and music for dancing, and, of course, the beverages: fine wines, champagne, punch, sparkling ciders and eggnog. The music was provided by John Schwennesen's "Top Quartet" and brought back memories of many New Years past.

The Hall was decorated with balloons and festive ribbons. The noisemakers, hats and small electric candles on the clothed tables

reminded everyone why they were there. The food line began with a variety of cheeses and cheese nut-rolls, choices of bread and crackers galore with inviting dips, salad tidbits of cucumbers, celery and cauliflower and more and ended with chicken wings and meatballs elegantly served by tuxedo-clad attendants. The dessert table featured a huge chocolate-frosted cake, a huge white-frosted cake and a variety of cookies. It was "have a dance or two, chat with friends, then back to the food or beverage tables" for many of the couples--also elegantly dressed for the occasion.

At the stroke of midnight...New York time, of course... the large TV screen showed Times Square where the 12-foot-wide Waterford crystal ball plunged downward to end 2008 and bring in the New Year. Another three hours until the beginning of 2009 on the West Coast; but it was a perfect party and the perfect place to wish all a Happy New Year!

With sincere appreciation to our Dietary Food Services, Activity Center, Post Fund Enterprises and everybody that contributed to this memorable event ending 2008, our many thanks and best wishes go to all for 2009.



As November brought the start of the Holiday Season, it also brought that ever so awaited new furniture to Section A. Questions, comments and a little bit of trepidation that accompanied the arrival - *Will I like it? Will it meet my needs?* Many Member took matters into their own hands; pulled out their tape measures, pen and paper, took precise measurements of the furniture and made maps of their rooms - all to figure out how to place it.

Mr. Jim Looney received the first set of furniture - an adjustable bed, dresser, desk and chair, two night stands and a wardrobe. The light color of the new furniture made his room look bright, warm and welcoming, as did the expression of pure delight on Mr. Looney's face. His room became the show room to all who wanted to see how the new furniture looked when it was set up. He was excited, proud and gracious to show it off.

Mr. Robert DeSoto stated, "I love my new furniture, I love my room."

Some had worried about losing storage space. The new lockers are a bit smaller than the older, heavier lockers, but surprisingly, the members are finding that with the new and larger dresser they have more storage space than before.

Mr. Propst showed his delight that Mrs. Propst is happy to have drawers that fit all of her sweaters. This project is moving forward at a very steady pace. Section 'A' will be completed by the end of January. The property crew will then move on to Section 'E'. By then, most of the wrinkles and crinkles that go along with a project of this size will be ironed out.



The Property crew is very hard working and devoted in exchanging the old with the new while giving a helping hand to help put rooms back in good living order.



Movie Nights in Holderman Rec Area

Date	Time	Movie
Fri, Jan 9	6pm	Sex & the City
Mon, Jan 12	6pm	Sitting Pretty
Wed, Jan 14	6pm	Missing
Fri, Jan 16	6pm	Get Smart
Mon, Jan 19	6pm	Words and Music
Tue, Jan 20	6pm	White Heat
Wed, Jan 21	6pm	Impromptu
Fri, Jan 23	6pm	Mamma Mia!

New Beds for the Hospital

Long awaited new hospital beds arrived on December 19, 2008. It was a flurry of activity as the new beds were unloaded from the big semi, put together, cleaned, bedding and linens added before switching the ne with the old. Everyone working on the project was all smiles because the beds had arrived before Christmas.





# Melvin Miller--Pearl Harbor Survivor and Patriot

By Lou Zauner



Born in West Virginia and attended the University of Cincinnati. At age 19 he decided to join the Army Air Corps. With five other comrades, he went down to enlist.

December 7, 1941, Melvin Miller was one of few Air Corps personnel on Base that morning. Most had been granted leave in advance of preparation for possible later conflict with Japan. Miller had just finished breakfast and was sitting on the porch of his quarters when the Sunday morning silence was interrupted by the roar of strange planes with red circles coming over the base and suddenly the bombs and machine-gun bullets came raining down. Miller agrees that the Japanese couldn't have planned the attack better: the ammunition and guns were locked in a special closet, and Base aircraft conveniently aligned on the parade grounds after some formal Base ceremonies. All but one amphibious aircraft, termed "the duck," had been damaged. The rest of the day of that fatal day and necessary time after wards was spent cleaning up and preparing for the inevitable--Declaration of War.

Now Staff-Sergeant Melvin Miller's hard-work and competency became noticed by high ranking

officers, and he was promoted to Warrant Officer which meant transfer but subsequently more promotions to Second Lieutenant, then First Lieutenant. His subsequent career assignments were in China--strategic air bases; and commands with responsibilities far in excess of his rank. During this time, he became acquainted and was recognized by General Officers Chenault, Stillwell and LeMay. Unknown to Miller at the time was the fact that high ranking officers were seeking air-launch sites for bombers to carry the Atomic Bomb to Japan, but Miller discouraged their plans for his bases in China because of dikes and levees which could not be flattened without serious flooding.

WWII ended and Miller was separated from the-now Air Force at Beale Air Force Base in 1945--but remained in the reserves. A new chapter of military career began with the Korean War when he was recalled and during that time met Eleanor, his wife-to-be. Eleanor was an Air Force Nurse and both were assigned to Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska. Cold as it was there, their romance was warmed to marriage. While pursuing sales and managerial positions as a civilian, Melvin Miller always remained in the Air Force Reserve and retired as a Major.

Melvin and Eleanor Miller had five children during their 58 years together, and came to the Veterans Home in Yountville in November of 2003--just having celebrated their fifth year in well-deserved retirement. Our sincere thanks and blessings go to both of these Veterans and Patriots extraordinaire.



## A Greeting from Home

Former Yountville Veterans Home employee Malena Rathbone is now stationed on a little island Auldide off of Saudi Arabia. Malena would love to hear from her friends, co-workers and acquaintences here in Yountville. Please send her a card, letter or just a quick hello. It always helps morale, here and there, to be able to keep in contact with home. Malena's address is:  
Malena Rathbone  
379 EOSS/OSAT  
APO, AE 09309

# Trained for Generations

## Bart Buechner Follows Tradition

By Chris Williams



Many staff members at the Vets Home are following in footsteps of parents and grandparents who built careers here. Deputy Administrator Bart Buechner is an import, but he brought tradition along with him: his grandfather served in World War I, his father in World War II. After the Naval Academy at Annapolis and his active duty career, he continues his service to military veterans here.

"I have always been attracted to organizations and institutions that serve a greater good or higher calling," Buechner told Veterans Advantage. "If it hadn't been the military, it would have been the ministry or education. Those may come later, too."

Bart joins Administrator Marcella McCormack in being always accessible to the more than one thousand residents of the Veterans Home. Since he oversees many of the major improvements, he is a steady source of information on progress. For instance, the renovation of the vital Member Services Center remains on schedule and is due for completion early next year.

Bart, being Deputy Adminsitrator, is involved with many service organizations such as VVA 702, Navy League, East Bay Stand Down and is the driving force behind many of the activities here at the Home. It is loyal dedicated employees such as Bart, that makes this facility truly a home.

*The Grapevine insert is produced by the Public Information Office at the Yountville Veterans Home, Jody Price, Editor. All correspondence should be addressed to The Grapevine, 100 California Dr., Yountville, CA 94599*